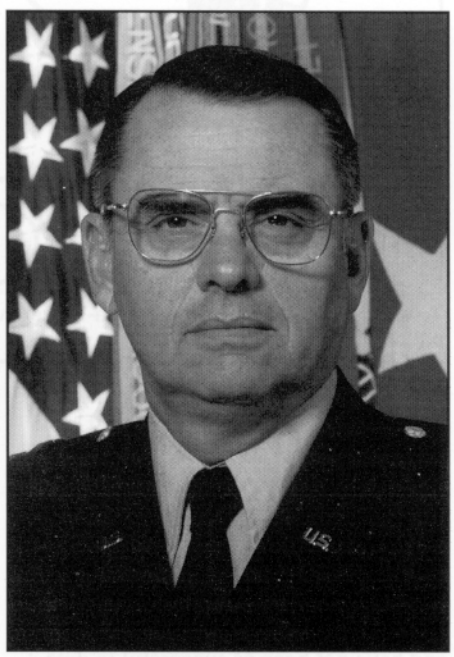
Major General William L. Nash, Commanding General of the 1st Armored Division and Task Force Eagle, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Task Force Eagle in Operation Joint Endeavor—
Lessons Learned in Peace Enforcing

Interview by Patrecia Slayden Hollis, Editor

Editor's Note: This interview was conducted in Tuzla, Bosnia, on 14 October 1996, just before the US 1st Armored Division began redeploying to Germany. Task Force Eagle had 26,000 soldiers from 11 nations and included two brigades of the 1st Armored Division, a Russian airborne brigade, Nordic-Polish brigade and Turkish brigade as its maneuver brigades. The task force arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina in December 1995 as part of NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) for the Dayton Peace Accord. Task Force Eagle was responsible for 22,000 square kilometers of the disputed area of the former Yugoslavia. (See the map on Page 6.)

The operation, called Joint Endeavor, was to enforce the military provisions of the accord—stop the fighting among the Muslims, Serbians and Croatians. The provisions stipulate that the former warring factions be separated by a four-kilometer zone of separation (ZOS) approximately along the cease-fire line, withdraw their heavy weapons outside a 10-kilometer zone, store their air defense weapons, return equipment to storage sites and personnel to cantonment areas and remove thousands of mine fields set during the previous four years of war.



Q *What are the most significant lessons you've learned in this peace enforcement mission?*

A First, I'm convinced that our success has been directly related to our proficiency and credibility as a warfighting force. From Day One, the former warring factions only saw a disciplined, competent, professional military force—not a provocative one, but one prepared to fight if anybody wanted to give us a fight.

That approach translates into how soldiers do everything all the time. For example, an artillery platoon's rehearsal at its base camp is critical for it to conduct a road march to a firing position several kilometers away and occupy the position rapidly, all in the most efficient and professional manner. We've probably had more AARs [after-action reviews] in the past year than the NTC [National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California] has had in the last five—that's a hell of a statement because I know how many AARs the NTC has had.

The former warring factions watch us all the time and notice details, such as the direction the howitzer tubes are pointing. Word quickly reaches the factions' leaders that the IFOR has positioned a firing platoon in range of "x" compound or "y" activity. That allows the IFOR commander to deal with issues from a position of strength. So warfighting skills are critical to peace enforcing.

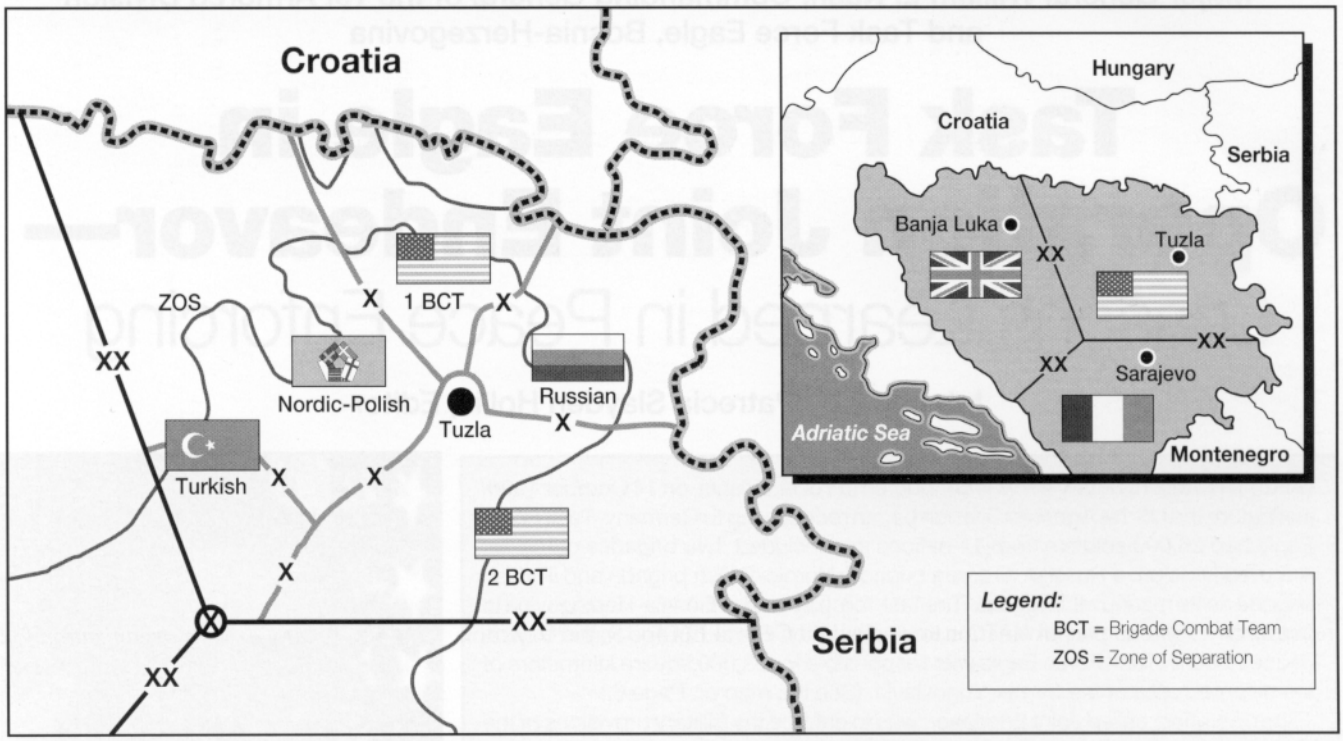
The second thing we concluded is that in peace enforcing and similar military operations in the world today, the land combat soldier is the key to getting the job done—on the ground with boots in the mud and snow. In Joint Endeavor, he separates the factions and makes sure they comply with the military provisions of the Dayton Accord. I would tell you that our proficiency at decentralized operations is a strength of the American Army—our junior leaders can take the commander's intent, plan the mission and execute at their levels.

In the Balkans, land power rules. To use only super smart, stand-off icon technology to deal with these people would be to misunderstand the nature of the conflict. A "smart" bomb doesn't always work against a "dumb" enemy.

Now, having said that, our land combat soldier *better* be the best equipped, smartest guy on the battlefield, or the peace field. He has to be backed up by superior technology—automation, equipment, intelligence systems, etc. Supporting the land combat soldier must be a joint effort to maximize his capabilities.

Third, we learned that when you use land combat power in the peacekeeping or peace building role, you can't achieve an end state of long-term peace—of stability and prosperity in the area. In general, a military element only can bring about an absence of war.

There has been conflict in this part of the world for many centuries. To achieve peace, the factions will have to address



Task Force Eagle's Sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The task force had troops from the US 1st Armored Division from Germany and 10 other nations.

the political, economic and social aspects of the conflict. Regardless of how successful Operation Joint Endeavor is—and I'm pleased with the results of our military mission—there will be no peace unless the people and leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina achieve it. It's evident the political, economical and social components of peace are harder to build and have not been as successful to date.

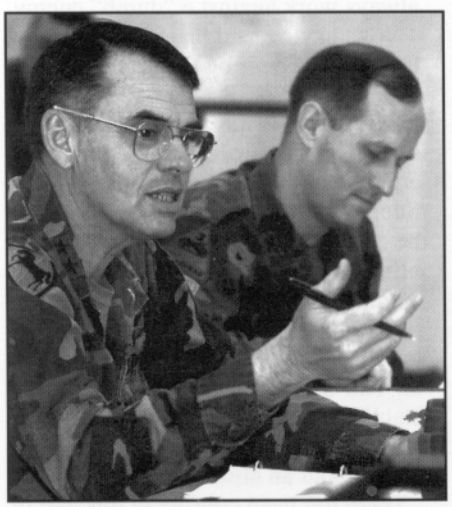
My last lesson deals with force protection. In a multinational environment such as this one, this subject can be somewhat controversial as armies' philosophies of military operations are different. The fact is, the American Army focuses on force protection as a dynamic incumbent of military operations.

Force protection is important for a number of reasons. Commanders must take care of the sons and daughters entrusted to them to accomplish the nation's military missions. Force protection multiplies combat power, ensures you have the soldiers to get the job done right.

Force protection has a psychological impact on the opposing force, in this case, the former warring factions. When we entered the Balkans in the dead of winter efficiently, rapidly—something no army in the history of the world has done—and we did it safely, the Balkan people were impressed. Force protection makes us more proficient and credible as a warfighting force.

One misperception is that force protection is something static, something akin to staying safely in base camp. Not so. The 1st Armored Division has driven more miles and flown more hours in Bosnia-Herzegovina during Joint Endeavor—for example, B Battery, 4th Battalion, 29th Field Artillery has driven four times the mileage it drove in Germany and has driven them in the mountains.

Force protection is actively patrolling and having an intelligence system everywhere. It's poking your finger into the chest of folks who tend to want to get into mischief. Force protection is more than sweat and sand bags; it's aggressive acts to keep the peace.



MG Nash with his Chief of Staff COL Brown during a nightly battle update brief (BUB).

Q *What is the Joint Military Commission and how did you use it?*

A The JMC conducts regular meetings led by task force commanders to bring faction leaders together to ensure everyone understands the requirements of the peace accord and to resolve issues. The value of the JMC is all sit in the same room and hear the same rules consistently from the corps to the battalion levels. The JMC meetings at the brigade and battalion levels are held more frequently and bring more of the implementers—or potential perpetrators—together for no-nonsense discussions.

At my level, I'll have an occasional JMC meeting to put out the "rules of the road" to everyone, but I concentrate on bilateral meetings to discuss issues with

one faction or another. Those meetings are a little easier because the factions can't needle each other and don't put on a show of bravado. I found that less formal meetings are more effective—a little kindness, a little humor go a long way.

Q *When a problem arises between factions, you use a "non-lethal engagement" process to solve it. How does the process work?*

A We've come up with a four-step process to solve faction problems. The steps sound simple but are, in fact, very complicated.

First, when a problem arises, you isolate the situation—you don't allow a local incident to become a national problem. That means ensuring you understand the scope of the problem and reacting quickly to move information to the units that need it and an appropriate level of force into the problem area.

Second, you dominate the situation—not only physically with forces, but also morally with a firm stand based on the peace treaty. Our commanders have done that brilliantly.

In the third step, we maintain moment-by-moment updates on the incident and convey that information up and down the chain of command. We fly UAVs over the incident. We also send Kiowa Warriors and some Apaches deep into areas that might have impact on the situation—for example, faction forces that might move to support one side or another. We also conduct covert operations to ensure our intelligence systems are focused and that we're the smartest guy on the block.

It's very important that the entire chain of command has common situational awareness. In this CNN world we live in, local incidents can quickly have strategic implications. Therefore, the platoon leader or company commander at the point of action must share his view of the situation rapidly up the chain of command, maybe all the way to SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe] and Washington, D.C.

The fourth step is taking what we call "multi-echelon, multi-dimensional actions" to resolve the situation. In our more than 300 days in country, we've had hundreds and hundreds of incidents. As we say, "a crisis a day—somedays small, somedays big."

The problem that occurred yesterday never became a national incident because we followed the four steps—took multi-echelon, multi-dimensional actions. Local police took a refugee family of one faction hostage as the family returned to the village. The police beat up the hostages, took cameras from our military cameramen and threatened our Russian brigade soldiers, who had responded to the incident.

In terms of multi-echelon actions, we had task force soldiers on the scene trying to defuse the situation and commanders at the brigade level dealing with their faction counterparts—one commander in the security police headquarters, working the issue from that point of view. Meanwhile, I was talking to government officials and faction corps military commanders and my ARRC [Allied Central Europe Rapid Reaction Corps] commander was talking to the president and minister of interior of one country and the president of another. Simultaneously, we all sang the same tune: there's a problem in this village; we'll handle it; make sure your soldiers stay in their barracks; and (for the guilty faction) pass the order down to the local police to get in line with the treaty.

Our corrective actions also are multi-dimensional—on the scene, through the factions' recognized chain of command and, as necessary, in the "deep attack." If, say, the local police of a village continues to break the peace accord, we position Apache helicopters "deep" at the storage site of the guilty faction's heavy equipment, which may be 20 or 30 kilometers away from the village. Then we make sure the guilty faction understands that if the incident blows up, the Apaches will destroy that equipment in about 45 seconds. And, oh-by-the-way, we may have a couple of F-18s from an aircraft carrier fly low over the incident area and/or the weapons site to further demonstrate our determination to carry out the threat, as necessary.

In the incident yesterday, the local police acquiesced—released the family members, returned the cameras and backed off. So the steps worked to defuse the situation, and most of the world never knew the incident happened.

Q *What was your organization for combat coming into country and how and why did you change that organization as Operation Joint Endeavor progressed?*

A It was exciting trying to determine our organization for combat in the September-October time frame last year because of several dynamics. One was they were still negotiating the Dayton Accord, still defining the military provisions. So we kept one eye on the negotiations while simultaneously putting together the multinational coalition.

Major General Nash talks to a Russian soldier from the Russian airborne brigade in Task Force Eagle.

Another dynamic was our trying to understand the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even though the division had worked on Bosnia for a number of years, all the expertise was based on different missions—imposing combat power into the area or supporting a UN withdrawal. As we were figuring out the situation in Bosnia, we were putting the force structure together.

We knew we wanted a lot of fire support assets in Task Force Eagle. A major challenge came when the Nordic-Polish Brigade [Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia] decided to bring small mortars as its only indirect fire assets.

So we chopped a battery from our 2d Battalion, 3d Field Artillery to the Nordic-Polish Brigade to provide guns and an FSE [fire support element] for the fire support coordination slice while FIST [fire support team] assets from the 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, provided the forward observation piece. Then my FSCOORD [fire support coordinator] tied that all together with radar coverage and integrated it into the division artillery—a classic example of how we structured multinational fire support in Task Force Eagle. That was our Total Army, multi-echelon fire support solution, and it worked very well.

We designed the force as a combined arms team with fire support integrated into the scheme of maneuver, including positioning fire support assets for visibility—close air support aircraft, attack helicopters, artillery and mortars.

We brought an unusual amount of counterbattery/countermortar radar assets with us, including the three Firefinder target acquisition batteries from US Army Europe [USAREUR]. We brought in additional radars from the 35th Infantry Div Arty [35th Infantry Division (Mechanized) Artillery], part of the Kansas National Guard, to cover Sarajevo under the tactical control of the 6th French Division but technically supervised by our FSCOORD.

Firefinder not only covered areas to detect indirect fires but also identified small arms fires—a bit of a challenge for the number of acquisitions. With the help of some great folks from CECOM [Communications and Electronic Command], those batteries developed excellent radar acquisition and target processing procedures and are the best trained in the US Army. So we designed the force initially to be, as Secretary of Defense William Perry said, "the toughest, meanest, biggest dog in town." Then as the former warring factions routinely and habitually complied with the provisions of the peace accord and massively demobilized, our force requirements to counter their militancy reduced.

So we began to focus on providing security for the national elections in September 1996. In the summer, we redeployed two heavy battalions back to USAREUR and introduced two military police [MP] battalions. Although we still maintained substantial warfighting capabilities, we traded slightly more than a hundred armored vehicles for well over 200 MP armored HMMWVs [high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles]. The HMMWVs can go more places and cover larger areas while causing less damage to the limited, fragile Bosnia-Herzegovina roads.

Interestingly enough, this placed a burden on the military police to be the combined arms integrator for the tank, infantry and FA battalions—to interface with the FSEs, PYSOPs [psychological operations], civil affairs teams and the other combined arms combat multipliers. The MPs did extremely well.

On a smaller scale, we brought in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to keep an eye on the factions' weapons and ammunition storage sites and activities, reducing the requirement to constantly patrol. One of [Air Force UAV] Predator's great features is that headquarters elements at multiple echelons can see the same picture at the same time. Our aviation assets also have provided thousands of valuable hours of surveillance—as well as specific reconnaissance and demonstration-of-force missions.

Q *What message would you like to send Army and Marine Redlegs stationed around the world?*

A Thanks for your great work. Task Force Eagle artillerymen are in all positions on the task force team, including being sent into some very difficult, nasty situations—setting up and inspecting faction weapons storage sites, convincing faction leaders to do the "right thing" and defusing situations. Redleg professionalism and superb performance have been paramount to the success of this operation. And we have been successful at our mission: stopping the conflict.

The responsibility for peace—stability and prosperity—rests on the shoulders of the people and leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Regardless of whether or not peace ensues, I'll remain proud of and feel it an honor to have served with the soldiers of Task Force Eagle—be they Americans, Russians, Turks, Swedes or any other nationalities in the force.

SGT Nicole Smith, 135th PAD, Steel Castle Base, Bosnia

Task Force Eagle headquarters, dubbed the "White House," is on the former Yugoslavian Tuzla AFB.

Major General William L. Nash commanded NATO's Task Force Eagle, composed of 15 brigades and 26,000 soldiers from 11 nations, in Bosnia-Herzegovina from December 1995 to November 1996; simultaneously, he commands the 1st Armored Division now redeployed to Germany. His previous assignment was as the Program Manager for the Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program in Riyadh. He commanded the 1st Brigade, 3d Armored Division in Germany and during Operations Desert Shield and Storm in the Gulf.